

## **FIRST CALL FOR ASSISTANCE: THE FEMA TELEREGISTRATION LINE**

**MONTGOMERY**—Hurricane Katrina victims in Alabama's three declared counties as well as evacuees from other hard-hit Gulf Coast states are reminded that the only way to register for federal and state disaster assistance is by calling the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) toll-free teleregistration line.

"Registering with FEMA is the essential first step that people must take in order to be eligible for our assistance programs," said FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer Ron Sherman. Sherman said that registration with any other agency, local government or the American Red Cross does not enlist applicants for state/FEMA aid.

All disaster victims throughout the area are urged to call FEMA's toll-free application number

**1-800-621-FEMA (3362)** or for the speech- or hearing-impaired **1-800-462-7585 (TTY)**.

The toll-free telephone numbers are available 24-hours a day, seven days a week until further notice. Multilingual operators are available at these numbers to assist disaster victims. Registration can also be completed online at <http://www.fema.gov>.

"We ask and encourage media throughout the state to prominently display FEMA registration information as often as they can," said State Coordinating Officer Bruce Baughman of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency. Baughman explained that the continuing influx of Louisiana and Mississippi residents seeking temporary accommodation in the state make it imperative to repeat applicant information as often as possible.

The three Alabama counties eligible for FEMA individual assistance programs are Baldwin, Mobile and Washington. The aid can include funding for temporary disaster housing assistance, U. S. Small Business Administration low-interest loans for individuals and business owners to repair or replace real or personal property and housing repair; grants to help meet serious disaster-related needs and expenses not covered by insurance or other assistance programs; and disaster unemployment assistance.

Due to the extraordinary scale of devastation, applicants are encouraged to call late in the evening or very early in the morning, or on weekends. The best time to call is after 12 midnight, when call volume is at its lowest.

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FEMA prepares the nation for all hazards and manages the federal response and recovery efforts following an incident of national significance. FEMA also initiates mitigation activities to reduce the risk of loss in future disasters, trains first responders, workers with state and local emergency managers, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program

and the U.S. Fire Administration. FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 2003.